

He charg'd his father faithfully;
That he himself should keep the key
Until the child could write and read,
And then to give it him indeed.

Pray do not open it at all,
Whatever does to you befall,
For it may do my godson good,
If it be rightly understood.
The second part I will unfold,
As true as ever a tale was told,
Concerning of his lovely child,
Who was obedient, sweet, and mild.

PART II.

THIS child did take his learning so,
If you the truth of this would know,
At eleven years of age indeed,
He could both Greek and Latin read.
But thinking of his cabinet,
Which was with pearls and jewels set,
He asked his father for the key,
The which he gave him speedily

His cabinet he did unlock,
But he was in amazement struck,
When he the riches did behold,
And also saw the chain of gold.
But searching farther he did find
A paper that disturbed his mind;
Which was within the cabinet,
In Greek and Latin it was writ.

My son, serve God that is on high
And pray to him incessantly,
Obey your Parents, serve the King,
That nothing may your conscience sting;
For seven years hence your fate will be
To be hang'd upon a tree:
So pray to God both night and day:
To let that hear pals away.

When he these trueful lines did read,
He with a sigh did say, Indeed
If hanging be my destiny,
My parents shall not see me die,
For I will wander too and fro,
And go whither I do not know,
But first I'll ask my parents leave,
In view their blessings to receive.

Then locking up the cabinet,
He went unto his chamber strait,
And went unto his parents dear,
Beseeching them with many a tear,
That they would grant what he did crave,
Your blessing first I beg to have,
And hope you'll let me go my way,
'Twill do me good another day.

For I indeed have made a vow,
But must not tell the reason now;
But if I live I will return,
When seven years are past and gone.

Both man and wife did then reply,
We fear, dear son that you will die,
If we shou'd yield to let you go,
Our aged hearts will burst with woe.
Yet he entreated eagerly.

So that they forc'd were to comply,
And gave consent that he should go,
But where, alas! we did not know:
In the third part you soon shall find
That fortune to him was most kind,
And after many dangers past,
He came to Durham at the last.

PART III.

HE went by chance as I've heard say,
Unto the house that very day,
Whereat his godfather did dwell,
Now mind what fortune him befel.

This youth did crave a service there,
And strait came out the godfather,
And seeing him a handsome youth,
He took him for his page in truth.
In this same place he pleas'd so well,
That above all he bore the bell,
And so well his Lord did please,
He made him higher by degrees.

He made him butler indeed,
And then chief steward was with speed,
Which made the other servants spite,
And envy him both day and night.
He ne'er was false in his trust,
But proved ever true and just;
And to the Lord did hourly pray,
To guard him still both night and day.

In this same place it doth appear,
Helliv'd the space of seven years,
And of his parents thought upon,
And of his promise to return.
Then humbly of his Lord did crave,
That he his free consent might have,
For to go and see his parents dear,
Whom he had not seen for many years,

So having leave, away he went,
Not dreaming of the bale intent,
Which was contriv'd against him then,
By wicked, false, and malicious men;
Who had in his portmanteau put
Their noble Lord's fine golden cup,
And when the Lord at dinner was,
He miss'd the cup as it came to pass.

Where should it be? the Lord did say,
We had it here but yesterday:
The butler then reply'd with speed,
If you would know the truth indeed,
Your faithful steward that is gone,
With feather'd nest away is flown;
I do believe he has that and more,
Which does belong unto your store.

No, said the Lord that cannot be,
For I have try'd his honesty,
Then said the cook, my Lord, I'll die,
Upon a tree that's nine feet high.
But hearing what this man did say,
Did send a messenger that day,
To take him with a hue and cry,
And bring him back immediately.

They search'd his portmanteau inde
In which they found the cup with speed,
Then he was struck with sad surprise,
And scarcely could believe his eyes,
The Lord then said unto him strait,
Thou shalt be hanged at my gate,
Because in you I put my trust,
And I took you for nought but just.

PART IV.

THE day was fix'd and being come
Said he, O Lord, it was my doom,
Tho' innocent I do declare,
How my Lord's cup came to be there,
What fate decrees none can deny,
I was adjudg'd thus to die
Upon a fatal gallows tree,
Which my godfather did foresee.

In travelling pains my mother was,
Into the world I came at last,
A gentleman with skill did show
Such death I now am coming to;
A chain and a cabinet he gave
Unto my father which I have;
The manuscript which was therein,
Did show me plain I should be hang'd.

So the Lord hearing him say so,
It came into his mind then to
Keep him from off the gallows high,
For I think this man is not guilty,
Something I doubt, there is in this,
Methinks it is with meer malice
Of the cook and the butler too;
And if so, I'll make them rue.

The cause he tries a second time,
And found them guilty of the crime;
They were adjudg'd to be hang'd strait,
Indeed they did deserve their fate.
The Lord he took him, and did say,
Have you that cabinet, I pray
Yes, noble Lord, this is the same
Was left me with this very chain.

My daughter is a virgin bright,
And you shall have her this very night,
Wherefore now take delight in her,
'Tis I who am your God-father.
Here's twenty thousand pounds in gold
And when I'm dead it shall be told,
You shall enjoy my whole estate,
For to make you both rich and great.

